

In the Claims

Kindly cancel Claims 41, 45, 46 and 47 without prejudice and with right of re-entry into this application or any other appropriate application. Kindly add new Claim 67. Kindly amend Claims 36-38, 40, 42, 49, 50, 52, 57, 60-63 and 66 as follows.

1-35(Cancelled).

36(Currently Amended). An absorbent article having a length and a width, a front area and a rear area, and a central area between the front and rear areas, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer, which, when the absorbent article is in use, is turned toward a body of a wearer ~~during use of the absorbent article;~~
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer, which, when the absorbent article is in use, is turned away from such body of such wearer ~~during use of the absorbent article;~~
- (c) a liquid distribution layer disposed between said liquid-permeable layer and said liquid-impermeable layer, said liquid distribution layer comprising
 - (i) an undulating strip of material (26) layer disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer and extending between from the central area into at least one of the front area and the rear area, and
 - (ii) an additional strip of material (28) disposed between the undulating strip of material (26) and the liquid-impermeable layer, and extending between the front area and the rear area, said additional strip of material (28) having a portion thereof wherein openings formed therethrough are spaced from each other by areas of the portion which are devoid of such formed openings; and

~~(d) a liquid distribution layer disposed between the undulating layer and the liquid-impermeable layer, and extending between the front area and the rear area, said liquid distribution layer comprising at least one web of sheet material, said at least one web of sheet material having openings therein formed after fabrication of the at least one web of sheet material; and~~

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~~(e)(d) a liquid storage layer between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer, said liquid distribution layer transferring fluid to at least part of the liquid storage layer located in one or both the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article,~~

said undulating layer comprising elongate undulations defining elongate open flow channels between said undulating layer and underlying and overlying elements of said absorbent article which are in contact with said undulating layer.

37(Currently Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 36, said openings in said ~~at least one web~~ additional strip of sheet material ~~being~~ reflecting having been mechanically-formed ~~openings formed~~ subsequent to formation of said ~~at least one web~~ additional strip of sheet material.

38(Currently Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 36 wherein the undulating layer strip of material selectively facilitates transfer of fluid longitudinally, along the length of said absorbent article, into one or both the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article.

39(Previously Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 36, the undulations being arranged so as to form elongate and generally continuous transport channels extending along the length of said absorbent article.

40(Currently Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 36 wherein the undulating ~~layer comprises an undulating~~ strip of material ~~defining~~ defines elongate undulations therein, connected at spaced locations to said ~~liquid distribution layer which bears the openings~~ additional strip of material.

41(Canceled).

42(Currently Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 36 wherein said ~~at least one web~~ additional strip of material (28) comprises an uncreped through-air-dried material.

43(Previously Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 36, said liquid storage layer extending from the central area into the front area and the rear area, the liquid storage layer having a higher liquid retention capacity per unit area of said absorbent article in the respective one or both of the front area or the rear area than in the central area.

44(Previously Added). An absorbent article as in Claim 36, said liquid distribution layer transferring fluid to at least part of the liquid storage layer at areas of the liquid distribution layer and of the liquid storage layer, which are brought into contact with one another via compression.

45-47(Canceled).

48(Previously Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 36, the liquid distribution layer comprising fibrous compositions about said openings, wherein the openings in the liquid distribution layer have discharge ends at a major surface of said

liquid storage layer, for transferring fluid, such funnel-shaped openings tapering inwardly toward the liquid storage layer.

49(Currently Amended). An absorbent article having a length and a width, a front area and a rear area, and a central area between the front and rear areas, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a user during use of the absorbent article;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such user during use of the absorbent article;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer, comprising an uppermost layer and at least one take-away layer, at least one of said at least one take away layer having ~~which comprises~~ discrete passages therethrough, and zones of relatively greater fiber density of ~~said liquid distribution layer~~ adjacent ~~said the~~ discrete passages, the relatively greater fiber density promoting movement of liquid toward the liquid-impermeable layer, said uppermost layer being positioned between said liquid-permeable layer and said at least one take-away layer, and being devoid of such passages therethrough, said liquid distribution layer being disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer; and
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer, said liquid distribution layer transferring fluid to at least part of the liquid storage layer of the absorbent article.

50(Currently Amended). An absorbent article, comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a user~~during use of the absorbent article;~~
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such user~~during use of the absorbent article;~~
- (c) a liquid distribution layer, which comprises discrete passages therethrough, said discrete passages facilitating movement of liquid toward the liquid-impermeable layer; and
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer, ~~said liquid distribution layer transferring liquid to the liquid storage layer;~~

said liquid distribution layer comprising an ~~undulating~~ overlying strip of material and an additional strip of material, said passages being arranged in edges of the additional strip of material, said edges being folded inward such that said edges are ~~located under~~ facing the ~~undulating~~ overlying strip of material.

51(Previously Added). An absorbent article as in Claim 50 wherein said edges run in a longitudinal direction of the absorbent article, and are folded over a central portion of the additional strip of material such that the passages taper inwardly toward the liquid storage layer.

52(Currently Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 50, ~~wherein~~ further comprising undulations of in said ~~undulating overlying~~ strip of material ~~define~~ defining fluid transport channels extending in a longitudinal direction of said absorbent article.

53(Previously Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 50 wherein the additional strip of material comprises an uncreped through-air-dried material.

54(Previously Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 49, the liquid storage layer extending from the front area to the rear area of said absorbent article, the liquid storage layer having a higher liquid retention capacity per unit area of said absorbent article in the respective at least one of the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article, than in the central area.

55(Previously Added). An absorbent article as in Claim 49 wherein areas of the liquid distribution layer and areas of the liquid storage layer are in contact with one another via compression, thereby facilitating transfer of liquid.

56(Cancelled).

57(Currently Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 49 wherein the ~~passages have~~ liquid distribution layer has feet at tapering ends of said ~~the~~ the passage, said feet being in contact with the liquid storage layer at ~~an outer~~ a surface of the liquid storage layer.

58(Previously Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 49, the passages of the liquid distribution layer being disposed exclusively in one or both of the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article whereby the central area is devoid of the feet.

59(Previously Added). An absorbent article as in Claim 49 wherein the absorbent article comprises a woman's sanitary pad or a woman's hygiene inlay.

60(Currently Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 50 wherein the ~~undulating~~ overlying strip of material contains a colorant.

61(Currently Amended). An absorbent article having a front area, a rear area, and a central area between the front area and the rear area, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a wearer ~~during use of the absorbent article;~~
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from the such body of such wearer ~~during use of the absorbent article;~~
- (c) a fibrous liquid distribution layer, which promotes movement of liquid toward the liquid-impermeable layer, said liquid distribution layer being disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer; and
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer,

said liquid distribution layer comprising areas having passages defining openings for transferring liquid, ~~such passages having~~ said liquid distribution layer comprising feet at ends of such passages, said feet contacting the liquid storage layer, and forming areas, between the feet, of separation between the liquid distribution layer and the liquid storage layer where the liquid distribution layer and the liquid storage layer are spaced from each other, whereby said areas of separation attenuate reverse wicking of liquid from the liquid storage layer to the liquid distribution layer.

62(Currently Amended). An absorbent article having a front area, a rear area, and a central area arranged between the front area and the rear area, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a wearer during use of the absorbent article;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such wearer during use of the absorbent article;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer, said liquid distribution layer including at least first and second take-away layers each having funnel-shaped openings defining discrete passages, respective openings of said first take-away layer and said second take-away layer being spaced laterally from each other, with layer-to-layer surface interface between a said opening on said first take-away layer and any said opening on said second take-away layer; and
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer, ~~wherein respective openings of said first take-away layer and said second take-away layer of said liquid distribution layer are spaced laterally from each other, with layer-to-layer surface interface between a said opening on said first take-away layer and any said opening on said second take-away layer, thus preventing a direct, straight-line path for reverse wicking of fluid, whereby spacing of respective openings of said first take-away layer and said second take-away layer of said liquid distribution layer contributes to the prevention of liquid being transferred back from the liquid storage layer to the liquid distribution layer.~~

63(Currently Amended). An absorbent article having a front area, a rear area, and a central area arranged between the front area and the rear area, said absorbent article comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed toward a body of a wearer;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer which, when the absorbent article is in use, is disposed away from such body of such wearer;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and the liquid-impermeable layer, said liquid distribution layer including at least first and second take-away layers each having funnel-shaped openings defining discrete passages;
- (d) a liquid storage layer disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer and the liquid distribution layer, wherein respective openings of said first take-away layer and said second take-away layer of said liquid distribution layer are spaced laterally from each other, with layer-to-layer surface interface between a said opening on said first take-away layer and any said opening on said second take-away layer; and
- (e) ~~An absorbent article as in Claim 62,~~ said liquid distribution layer further comprising an uppermost layer disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and said take-away layers, said uppermost layer being void of any funnel-shaped openings.

64(Previously Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 63, said liquid distribution layer further comprising an undulating strip of material disposed between the liquid-permeable layer and said uppermost layer, said undulating strip of material containing colorant.

65(Previously Added). An absorbent article as in Claim 62, a first respective portion of each said funnel-shaped opening closest to the liquid-permeable layer being wider than a second respective portion of each said funnel-shaped opening most remote from the liquid-permeable layer, thereby forcing X-Y-direction travel as well as Z-direction travel of any potential reverse wicking liquid.

66(Currently Amended). An absorbent article as in Claim 49 wherein each of said liquid distribution layer at least one take-away layer comprises discrete passages defining openings (30) extending therethrough, said discrete passages tapering inwardly toward the liquid storage layer and facilitating the absorbent article (10) in transferring liquid from the liquid distribution layer (22) toward the liquid storage layer (24).

67(New). An absorbent article (10) having a front area (12) and a rear area (14), and a central area (16) between the front (12) and rear(14) areas, the absorbent article (10) comprising:

- (a) a liquid-permeable layer (18) which, when the absorbent article (10) is in use, is turned toward a body of a wearer;
- (b) a liquid-impermeable layer (20) which, when the absorbent article (10) is in use, is turned away from such body of such wearer;
- (c) a liquid distribution layer (22) disposed between the liquid-permeable layer (18) and the liquid-impermeable layer (20), and extending from the central area (16) into at least one of the front area (12) and the rear area (14); and
- (e) a liquid storage layer (24) disposed between the liquid-impermeable layer (20) and the liquid distribution layer (22),

the liquid distribution layer (22) comprising a major surface, which defines multiple open flow channels which promote liquid flow in a longitudinal direction toward the front (12) and/or rear(14) areas, further characterized in that the liquid distribution layer facilitates transfer of liquid longitudinally along the surface of the liquid distribution layer (22), and toward the liquid-impermeable layer (20), to at least part of the liquid storage layer (24a) which is located in one or both of the front area (12) and the rear area (14) of the absorbent article (10).